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## INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

## CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

COUNTRY USSR (Azerbaijani SSR)

REPORT

SUBJECT Morale and Security in the 42nd  
Border Guard Detachment

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This is UNEVALUATED Information

SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

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ARMY review completed.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

**CONFIDENTIAL****REPORT****COUNTRY** USSR (Azerbaydzhan SSR)**DATE DISTR.** 20 May 1955  
25X1**SUBJECT** Morale and Security in the 42nd Border  
Guard Detachment**NO. OF PAGES** 7**DATE OF INFORMATION****REFERENCES:****PLACE ACQUIRED****THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION****MORALE**

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**Dependents**

1. All border guard officers were allowed to have their families, presumably wife and children, with them. [redacted] voluntary re-enlistees (sverkhsrochniki) were also entitled to the same privilege. [redacted] numerous border guard officers' families at the 42d Border Guard Detachment (otdel) Headquarters in Gadrut (N 39-31, E 47000) and a few at the 1st Komentatura of the detachment. At the detachment there was even a nursery where the children of border guard officers could be left. [redacted] the CO lived with his wife and two children in one section of the zastava headquarters building. The political officer lived with his wife in the officers' billets near the zastava area, but subsequently his wife returned home because she was expecting a baby.

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25X125X1  
25X1**Restrictions on EM**

2. During [redacted] basic training [redacted] trainees were never allowed to leave the detachment area alone, although they were free from training and details on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays. If on rare occasions trainees received packages or postal money-orders from home, they would have to request permission to go to town from their training zastava CO. The latter would then accompany them personally into town to pick up the package or the money. [redacted]

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25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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training zastava CO accompanied him to the postoffice and back. All packages received by trainees were checked by officers, who were especially concerned as to whether the packages contained vodka or not.

3. While serving on border guard duty with the 3rd Border Guard Zastava, [redacted] members [redacted] had been at first allowed to visit neighboring villages on their day off. However, one sergeant visited a village in the company of another border guard soldier, became drunk, was bitten by a dog, and killed the dog with his SMG. A scandal ensued. The owner of the dog complained to the 1st Komendatura, which sent its political officer, a border guard major, to investigate the incident. As a result, from then on all passes into villages were cancelled. The border guard soldiers on their day off would then have to be satisfied with staying around the zastava area and reading. However, whenever members [redacted] were on patrol duty at the observation point on the zastava's left flank, they would sometimes chance it and sneak off to a nearby village [redacted] located about one kilometer from the observation point and consisting of about fifty houses. They would buy vodka there from a small shop. [redacted]

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If apprehended doing this, the border guard EM would have been sentenced to 15 days in the guardhouse. None of the border guard EM in his zastava, all of them conscripts, was allowed to drink, not even the first sergeant. However, all of them did drink occasionally, whenever their funds permitted it. Those border guard soldiers who checked the documents of passengers on the Transcaucasian Railroad would often buy vodka at the "diner" when the train stopped near the zastava.

#### Leave

1. All border guard officers were entitled to one month leave a year, exclusive of travel time. [redacted] the political officer took such an annual leave and was gone for over one month. He availed himself of this opportunity to take his pregnant wife home (see paragraph 1). While the political officer was on leave, the zastava CO read the political lectures in his place. Border guard soldiers were told that they were entitled to compassionate and meritorious leave. It was a matter of common knowledge among border guard troops that in case of sickness, death, or calamity at home, a soldier could be granted ten days leave, after official investigation. Meritorious leaves, also of ten days duration, were awarded to border guard soldiers receiving outstanding grades at the semi-annual proficiency tests and examinations given by the border guard districts to personnel of border zastavy. One soldier [redacted] received two such meritorious leaves. [redacted] Leaves were so infrequent [redacted] no [redacted] case [redacted] where more than one border guard soldier was on leave at any one time. There were no publicly-voiced complaints against the leave system, but no one was satisfied with it.

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- Discipline [redacted] was generally good but there were several exceptions. A border guard private [redacted] was sent to the 1st Komendatura on an errand and, while there, became intoxicated. The komendatura CO sentenced him to seven days in the komendatura guardhouse and informed his zastava CO of the action taken by phone. Drunkenness existed [redacted] but border guard soldiers had to do their drinking in secret. [redacted]

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The local Azerbaydzhan shopkeepers would not tell border guard officers whether or not they had sold vodka to border guard soldiers. For instance, in the case of the sergeant who had been bitten by a dog (see paragraph 2 above), the storekeeper, when questioned during the subsequent investigation, never admitted selling vodka to the sergeant.

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6. If officers drank, they did not show it publicly. [redacted]

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7. [redacted] one case of temporary disobedience, where a border guard private [redacted] balked at the first sergeant's order to clean the stables. He did, however, after a short while, listen to reason and comply with the NCOs orders. Another interesting incident, which may be classified as action opposed to good military order, occurred in April 1954 when there was a railroad accident involving the Trans-caucasian train, which, with much of its freight, fell into the Araxes River in the immediate proximity of the zastava. The zastava personnel succeeded in fishing out of the river 15 bags of good-quality flour. The zastava CO sent only three of these bags back to the komendatura, keeping the other twelve. He then ordered white bread baked from this flour and had it served to all the zastava personnel as long as the supply held out. However, should komendatura personnel visit the zastava, [redacted] CO would order the white bread hidden and the usual black bread served instead.

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### Troops Morale

8. Morale [redacted] was generally low. [redacted] CO [redacted] fed up with border guard duty, [redacted] sent in his resignation. He felt that with his pension, which was based on length of service, and whatever he might earn in civilian life, he could manage to live and be happier. However, his resignation was refused. Morale seemed especially low amongst the older border guard soldiers, members of the classes of 1931 and 1932, who were fed up with border guard duty. They often loudly complained about serving for the third or fourth consecutive year. These complaints would be especially violent during practice alerts when they would tell the more recently arrived recruits that they too would, in time, become tired of border guard service. When on patrol duty, which was usually carried out in pairs, members [redacted] would, among themselves, complain about the fact that officers received high pay, good food, and could live with their families, while the EM had none of these privileges and served like "beasts" (dikari) on the border.

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### Political Unreliability

[redacted] one case where a soldier was transferred for what the Soviets might define as political unreliability [redacted]

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[redacted] one soldier who had been serving in a border guard warehouse in Goradiz (N 39-27, E 47-13) was court martialled at detachment headquarters. A shortage of uniforms and boots was discovered in the warehouse. The soldier in question went before a border guard tribunal at the 42d Border Guard Detachment, and the ensuing proceedings revealed that the border guard soldier had been drinking a great deal during the recent past and had been selling the missing uniform items to local Azerbaydzhan inhabitants. It was rumored at the 42d Border Guard Detachment training group that the guilty soldier was sentenced to 10 years in a concentration camp.

### Desertion

In the 3rd Border Guard Zastava, the subject of desertion was not brought up. Only at the 42d Border Guard Detachment did the political officers [redacted] mention what fate deserters might expect. Trainees were told that any relatives of would-be deserters who knew about such plans for desertion would be sentenced to five years exile in Siberia. [redacted] political posters in the 42d Border Guard Detachment club houses which stated: "Desertion

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to the side of the enemy is punishable by the severest form of punishment". [redacted] all personnel knew that to mean death before the firing squad.

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## FRATERNIZATION

1. Because of the language barrier, there was very little fraternization between members [redacted] and the local Azerbaydzhan population. It was common knowledge, however, that one soldier who was of Azerbaydzhan origin and who belonged to the nearby Army VNOS post was courting a local Azerbaydzhan girl of the village of Dolekli. 2

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[redacted] strictly speaking, fraternization with the local population was forbidden to personnel of border guard units. Any conversation or dealings with the Azerbaydzhan population were supposed to be limited to those necessary to performing border guard duty and to check documents. However, these restrictions were not strictly adhered to and border guard troops would converse with local inhabitants, especially when the latter knew Russian.

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## SECURITY

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Document Checking

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Freight trains consisted of about 15 to 18 cars. They did not stop and were not inspected by the border troops who were only concerned with passenger trains. The passenger trains averaged twelve cars each and there were two passenger trains daily: The train from Baku stopped near the zastava for about one minute at 0700 hours every morning and the train from Yerevan also stopped for about one minute at 2100 hours every night. Trains were usually on time. It was the duty of the 3rd Zastava document-checking patrol to check the documents of all passengers boarding or dismounting from these trains, usually from about 10 to 15 passengers. The senior

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member of the document checking patrol would have the other member of the patrol stand on the far side of the train, between the train and the Iranian border,

passengers merely showed their passports. These bore the necessary stamp, which [redacted] was triangular in shape and read, "Inhabitant of the forbidden zone". In addition to this, the stamp bore a number and possibly other writing. The senior member of the patrol usually would check only the documents of those passengers whom he did not know by sight. Normally, most of the passengers were local villagers who regularly traveled to nearby Mendzhevan (N 39-04, E 46-85) to buy flour and other merchandise.

4. Anyone traveling on the road leading past the 3rd Border Guard Zastava also had to show his passport. During the day, the zastava guard on duty on the watchtower would, by means of a whistle or by shouting, signal him or her to stop if he did not recognize the person passing by. He would then call the CQ on duty by means of a phone which linked the watchtower to the zastava headquarters. The CQ would come out of the office into the road and check the passport. At night, the zastava guard on duty would be unable to see passing persons, but he would be able to hear any vehicle that might be passing by. He would stop all vehicles and the CQ on duty would check the passports of any occupants. On holidays, such as the First of May, border guard patrols at the 3rd Border Guard Zastava would be reinforced and would serve for 12 hours instead of the usual eight hours. They would patrol crossroads and villages. However, there would be no increased document checking of the local population. [redacted] the zastava CO would go to a nearby collective farm on Saturdays and hold a meeting with some representative of the local population.

[redacted] the CO would explain to the local population how it could help the border guard catch illegal border crossers. Local people would be given monetary rewards for helping apprehend illegal border crossers.

#### Indigenous Personnel

5. One of the privates [redacted] was an Armenian, who spoke fluent Russian, Armenian, and Azerbaydzan. He, therefore, served as an interpreter to the zastava CO (see paragraph 6 above).

#### Other MVD Troop Information

6. [redacted] a young man [redacted] was serving as a private in the interior troops of the MVD (subdivision unknown) as a prisoner escort. [redacted] his duties consisted mainly of escorting prisoners while they were being transported by railroad. [redacted] his home station was near Kuybyshev (N 55-27, E 78-20). [redacted] He was sent as a member of a five-man prisoner escort detail to pick up some prisoners. Somehow he arranged on his own to leave the other four soldiers at Penza (N 53-12, E 45-01); and, absents himself without leave, he went home and spent ten days there. When the four other soldiers returned through Penza with the prisoners, they were going to write him so that he could join them again and help escort the prisoners the rest of the way. Naturally his superiors knew nothing of all this and if found out he probably would have been severely punished. [redacted] wore the regular uniform worn by all Soviet soldiers, but with red shoulder boards. Since it was winter, he did not wear a service cap with a visor, but a fur cap like all other Soviet military personnel. No further information.

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17.

Censorship

18. All the letters [redacted] bore on the outside of the envelope a triangular stamp reading "Inspected by Military Censorship" (Voven-naya Tsenzura). [redacted]

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For instance, the letters [redacted] contained many censurable items but nevertheless seemed to arrive intact. [redacted]

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While undergoing basic training at the Basic Training Group of the 42d Border Guard Detachment, all trainees were told not to reveal military secrets or data in their letters home and not to complain about the service. One Azerbaydzhani recruit, [redacted] complained in a letter to his mother about the physical training. He was especially bitter about the horizontal bar, because apparently from doing the required daily exercises on it, his neck had become black and blue. His letter was intercepted and extracts of it were read to other trainees. He was also reprimanded for writing it, but he was not punished. [redacted] since this trainee had not yet taken the military oath, he could not be sentenced to detention in the guardhouse.

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Photographs

19. [redacted] border guard troops were allowed to have cameras and to take all the pictures they wanted, [redacted] one sergeant [redacted] had a camera. The latter developed his own films. At the Basic Training Group, trainees could receive permission to send for a professional photographer from Gadrut and to have their pictures taken on the post of the 42d Border Guard Detachment. However, pictures of soldiers with their weapons were not allowed.

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Document Security

20. [redacted] unidentified, classified orders and copies of the Border Guard Patrol Duty Regulations were kept in the CO's office in a locked, metal-trimmed, wooden bookcase. Only the three zastava officers had access to these papers.

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Use of Civilian Clothing

21. [redacted] quarters of the 3rd Border Guard Zastava officer for line matters, [redacted] civilian clothes hanging in the closet.

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PROPAGANDA

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Foreign Broadcasts

22. [redacted] in April 1954, an incident occurred [redacted] that everyone heard about. A soldier, while in the study or recreation room known as the Lenin Room turned on the radio. Precisely what the soldier heard never became known, but [redacted] the unit political officer entered the room and overheard the closing words of a Voice of America broadcast: "We transmit the Voice of America". The political officer immediately dragged the soldier into the CO's office. The latter was reprimanded but not punished. The radio was then moved into the CO's office and a loudspeaker was set up in the recreation room. This loudspeaker was wired to the radio; but from that time on, only the officers could turn the radio on or off.

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Soviet Propaganda

23. [redacted] Apparently all the propaganda lectures he heard were along the usual Soviet themes, i.e., U. S. aggression, the Soviet Union as peace-loving, and the idea that the Soviet Union possessed more powerful weapons than the imperialists. Much time was spent in discussing the yearly Party Congress. No new means or topics of indoctrination were apparently used during [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] in the border guard troops. Judging from outward appearances, the relationship between border guard line officers and border guard political officers was normal and cordial. [redacted] 25X1
- [redacted] 25X1

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